

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study discusses the situational factors influencing students' willingness to communicate in an online speaking classroom. This chapter will explain some fundamental aspects, such as the background of the study, the scope of the study, the research questions, the purposes of the study, the significance of the study, and the definition of the key terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

The trend of willingness to communicate (WTC) has been carried out from several studies in teaching speaking for more than 20 years (Yapi, 2016). Several studies have been investigated to explore the students' willingness to communicate concerning many focuses. MacIntyre, Clement, Dornyei, and Noels (1998) argued that presenting students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in L2 education is very important. They also stated that the definition of WTC in L2 is the readiness to participate in discourse at certain times to use L2 with certain people. Students' willingness to communicate is very important during language learning, having the courage to be able to communicate in the target language is considered as one way to develop skills. Since students who are less active in communicating can hinder effective interaction and language production (Khanday & Syed, 2019), practitioners must find ways to avoid it. One of them is by emphasizing that learning is best done using language.

Many factors influence the success of mastering a foreign language (FL). Specifically for speaking skills, the frequency of using language in communication (student exposure to the real world) will determine the development of this skill (Ismail, 2011). Students' speaking ability in a language will get better if they often use that language in the real world. However, students' desire to use language is influenced by many variables and factors. One of the most discussed variables in many studies are variables related to individual variables such as motivation (Gardner, 2007), self-esteem (Ahour & Hasanzadeh, 2015), self-confidence (Hashimoto, 2002), and anxiety (Dewaele et al, 2013; Horwitz et al, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994), and so on. Motivation, self-esteem, self-confidence, anxiety, and other individual variables are correlated (Adwani & Shrivastava, 2017). For example, motivated students must have good evaluations or positive self-esteem on themselves, and vice versa (Black & Wilima, 1998; Zoabi, 2012). Those who are motivated also have high self-confidence, and vice versa (Sari et al., 2015). On the other hand, anxiety and motivation have a negative correlation. In the study conducted by Dörnyei and Clément (2001), it was found that less motivated students tended to exhibit anxious behavior.

In this case, it could be seen that the variable that is contributive to other people is motivation. In communication, motivation must be able to arouse students' intentions to be involved (Adwani & Shrivastava, 2017) because motivation provides the main impetus for starting second language learning (L2). Through this process, it appears that the only variable that determines students' activeness in using language orally is motivation. In fact, psychological readiness or feeling willing to communicate (WTC) to use language is motivation in students before

other variables. Yashima (2002) stated that the willingness to communicate in a second language comes from self-confidence, which is influenced by one's motivation. It shows that indirectly, motivation is a contributive variable that influences students' willingness to communicate. It also explains that student participation in communication is determined by the variable closest to motivation, namely WTC. This aligns with the pyramid model of the WTC theory put forward by Dewaele et al. (2013), who placed L2 WTC in the top position variable that affects one's use of L2. At the same time, motivation as a variable that affects the use of one's L2 is placed under L2 WTC.

Several studies investigate the correlation between WTC and several variables in the EFL context. First, Manipuspika (2018) investigated the correlation between anxiety and the willingness to communicate in the Indonesian EFL context and found that anxiety positively correlated with students' WTC, meaning that anxious students tend to be more worried about communicating in English. The more anxious students are, the less willing they are. In addition, Yousefi and Kasaian (2014), in their research about willingness to communicate (WTC) and EFL learner's speaking fluency and accuracy, also found that WTC is positively correlated with students' speaking fluency, so it must be considered as an essential variable. Referring to two previous related studies, it is known that WTC has an important role in EFL teaching to improve students' fluency and accuracy in speaking. In the global context, the study regarding WTC also has been examined. Ishag (2020) emphasizes this idea which states that to acquire communicative ability, communication practice is the technique. Rizvic and Becirovic (2017) also develop this idea, saying that frequent communication practices increase the target

language for competency development. In this case, Reinders and Wattana (2015), in their study explain that active learners are likely to be successful in developing their language competence because they can take advantage of the available opportunities to communicate with other people. In addition, students' readiness to communicate in the form of output is also important because it can help them become successful students (Troike, 2012).

The research on WTC has become a growing discussion, and even numerous current research not only focuses on students' traits and personalities but also examine various dynamic factors that influence students' WTC. However, other studies have shown that most East Asian students who appear passive and silent in language classes cannot be easily attributed to purely cultural factors but that there are other factors, both external and internal to each individual, that may contribute to students' WTC (Zafar & Meenakshi, 2012). These factors can be identified as cultural, historical, and social conditions and processes. In the Indonesian context, Wijaya and Rizkina (2015) said in their research that students who show low WTC in English classes are caused by several factors related to assignments, different interactions with each other, and class size other than language anxiety. Meanwhile, the research by Ningsih, Narahara, and Mulyono (2018) added that students' hesitation to communicate was caused by their responses to the value of communication they encountered.

This study has discussed one form of verbal communication; therefore, it is referred to as the will to speak. Using a quantitative methodology, they only show a correlational relationship between WTC and its predictors (Kang, 2005). However, teachers will be in a better position if they are equipped with knowledge

about the factors that influence willingness to speak. Moreover, a little effort devoted by teachers to examine some of the contextual or environmental and individual factors that may influence this willingness in the language classroom environment would make it easier for them. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap of what situational factors influence students' willingness to communicate in an online speaking classroom.

Although numerous previous researchers have examined WTC, they only dealt with WTC in social situations, not in the language class environment. They focused on the WTC in general terms that refer to communication in both written and oral forms, and then added, more knowledge about factors that can affect students' WTC. Because of this reason, the researcher is interested in investigating the situational factors that influence students' willingness to communicate in online speaking classes and how they face it. This research is expected to provide benefits to describe what situational factors can affect students' WTC.

1.2 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on students' speaking desire in class, namely the willingness to communicate. It investigates the situational factors influencing students' desire to communicate in online speaking classes that can make students take the initiative to speak independently. This research was conducted for the fourth semester in the English Education Department of one of the universities in Southeast Sulawesi, especially in Speaking Class A.

1.3 Research Question

This study focused on the following questions: “What kind of situational factors can influence students’ willingness to communicate in an online speaking classroom?”

1.4 Purpose of the Study

Based on the research question, this study aims to determine what kind of situational factors can influence students’ willingness to communicate in an online speaking classroom.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research provides several important benefits in many aspects, especially in the classroom. This study presents some detailed information about situational factors that can affect students' willingness to communicate in online speaking classes. The student responses to situational factors that can affect students' willingness to communicate in online speaking classes develop more interesting activities and materials for conducting better teaching and learning activities. Lectures in the classes are expected to be able to find learning methods that suit students' needs based on students' responses and suggestions.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

For this study, the terms to be defined are willingness to communicate and situational factors.

Willingness to Communicate (WTC): a concept that has recently begun to receive considerable attention in second language acquisition research and language teaching practice. It brings together various factors that explain why learners do or do not engage in target language communication.

Situational factors: the influences that do not occur from within the individual but from other places, such as the environment and other people around the student study area, for example, when students communicate with people who speak more fluently.

Online speaking classroom: designed to give students practice in students willingness to communicate in online speaking class to express basic communicative functions in an English classroom.

